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Connecticut General Assembly



The State's leading force for women's equality since 1973.

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**Testimony of
 Teresa Younger, Executive Director
 Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
 Before the Appropriations Committee
 Friday, March 22, 2013**

Re: H.B. 6354, AA Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government

Greetings Senators Harp and Kane, Representatives Walker and Miner and members of the Appropriations Committee:

I'm Teresa Younger, Executive Director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, and it is a pleasure for me to be here. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in regards to H.B. 6354, AA Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government. I testify before you today on behalf of my Commissioners, the PCSW staff and the more than 1.4 million women in the state that the PCSW represents.

I respectfully ask you to reject the Governor's proposal to merge the legislative commissions-children, African American, Latino, and Asian Pacific American into the Commission on Citizen Advocacy expanding the mandate to include members of the LGBT community and to eliminate the Commission on Aging. The proposal is an ill-conceived policy initiative and ultimately will not reap the saving that is intended. The Governor's proposal makes the erroneous assumption that a re-aligned Commission on Citizen Advocacy - with one person from each respective "constituency" - could adequately serve or represent several communities.

In addition, the proposed restructuring of the board of "commissioners", moving from over 100 diverse members to a mere 7- deprives the various constituents the diverse voices they deserve and need. I truly find this concept disingenuous and laughable. Many studies have shown that when governing board dynamics, it takes a critical mass of 30% for any one population to be heard. It has been recommended by Catalyst, the leading nonprofit membership organization with a mission to expand opportunities for women and business, that creating effective board diversity requires this 30% number in order to turn the curve and effectively be heard. By limiting commissioners to one for each group does just the opposite.

Currently, the PCSW has 18 engaged commissioners, women from across the state with diverse experiences but a common interest in advancing the status of women. Each of these women brings critical insight, and together, their collective voice helps to make the PCSW what it is.

Each of the Legislative Commissions has a different constituency, but women remain the only majority consistently treated like a minority. Furthermore, we object strongly to the notion that women's issues are

interchangeable with those of other groups. The PCSW works collaboratively with the other commissions but most significantly with the Commission on Aging. Mutual respect for the expertise they bring to the table is supported by the strengths of the PCSW.

It should be noted that the legislative commissions are already streamlined. We have tightened our belts and share supplies, machines and space. Because I recognize the difficult job you have ahead of you, I flat-lined the agency's budget and am seeking only standard increases. Please know we do understand the challenges you all face in the next several months.

To put into perspective the budget of the PCSW, our annual allotment of \$504,394 is far less than 1% of the State's budget (.0000265%). That is approximately 35 cents for each of Connecticut's 1,435,664 women over the age of 18. This doesn't include the next generation of women who will work, pay taxes, raise families and vote. Some would argue - I would argue - that this is a worthy investment of "the people's money."

We want you to know that we continue to be absolutely committed to *bringing the government to 51 percent of the population*. Every day, my staff and I come to work aware of what a privilege it is to serve as the voice of women in this state and at the Capitol. And we're committed to assisting each of you with assessments of the policies coming forth and the impact those actions will have on women and their families here in Connecticut.

PCSW has been bringing the voices of women to the State Capitol for forty years, and through all of that time, we've been at the forefront of continuing progress for women in our state. Like many women, we don't toot our own horn, but it should be noted that because of the support of the General Assembly, *the PCSW is one of the oldest, largest, most effective and most recognized women's public policy commission in the country*. Our job is to provide information, analysis, and assistance to the General Assembly, State agencies, state leaders and the public on all matters concerning women. We represent a small investment that produces a sizeable and valuable return. Because of the work of the PCSW, our state government has been better equipped to address the needs of working parents, victims of sexual harassment, women with health care concerns such as breast cancer and lupus, women business owners, parents seeking child support, childcare workers, and women entering nontraditional occupations. Because of the work of the PCSW our state has been recognized as a national leader on the issues of women's economic security, health and safety and the elimination of gender discrimination, battles still faced by women today.

In its letter of support, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) writes: *"PCSW is valuable, effective and dynamic, and well-represents the concerns of Connecticut women and the thousands of families they support. Throughout its 40-year history, PCSW has repeatedly proven its capacity for data-driven advocacy, supporting the work of state policymakers, building public awareness of economic security issues, and promoting equal health care access."*

I'm here today to share with you some highlights of the Commission's work over the past year. As I do, I would ask you to consider the merits of our work based on our RBA compliance, our track record, and what the women of Connecticut say about us.

In our effort to fulfill our statutory mandate, PCSW has identified three issue areas as essential to obtaining equity for women: Economic Security, Health and Safety, and Eliminating Gender Discrimination. Based on these three concerns, PCSW identified a quality-of-life result statement for each priority area with indicators and strategies to "turn the curve," and has identified significant programs, agencies, and activities that contribute to the results we're striving to achieve. Our three "quality of life" desired results are:

- All Connecticut women are economically self-sufficient;
- All Connecticut women have optimal health and wellness throughout the lifespan; and

- All Connecticut women are free from sex discrimination in all aspect of their lives.

In addition to striving to fulfill these very aggressive quality of life desired results, we also have identified 5 goals for the agency. These goals are:

- To assess State policies and procedures as they affect women, and to develop administrative and legislative advocacy strategies to support or change those policies and procedures as needed.
- To gather, develop and disseminate research materials and provide information in order to help the General Assembly, the media and the public at large better understand the status, condition and contributions of women.
- To build partnerships and coalitions among the women of the state, various government agencies and members of the General Assembly.
- To promote awareness of the economic, health, safety, gender equity and leadership status of women throughout the lifespan.
- To promote leadership opportunities for women.

PCSW is not merely another advocacy or public policy agency. We are the *only nonpartisan comprehensive* state institution that evaluates laws and policies for their impact on the lives of women and their families. There are times when we are the only or lead voice on critical issues of health and safety, economic security and eliminating gender discrimination.

We bring an expertise and understanding that ties our work together with administrative agencies. Here are a few highlights of our activities:

Gender discrimination:

- Dept. of Corrections- For several years we monitored the sexual harassment complaints and process at the Department of Corrections (DOC). Although we made strides, with recent changes in leadership, the DOC is reverting to its old ways. We've audited DOC complaints to assess its longstanding culture of sexual harassment of female workers to make sure the DOC does not return to a culture that allows sexual harassment.
- Convene the Trafficking in Persons Council: The purpose of this council is to identify criteria for providing services to trafficking victims, and develop recommendations to strengthen State and local efforts to prevent trafficking, and protect and assist victims of trafficking. Council members include members from DCF, DOC, Attorney General's Office and DPH. Currently, PCSW is supporting efforts on HB5666 that has been signed on by nearly all female legislators to heighten penalties against perpetrators of trafficking.

Health and Safety:

- Hospital mergers- We monitor and promote dialogue among hospital administration, policy makers and advocates regarding proposed hospital mergers to ensure women's health services are preserved in conjunction with the Comptroller's office, Office of Health Advocate and co-chairs of the Public Health committee.
- Serve on the Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigation: The purpose of this commission is to design a sexual assault evidence collection kit and provide it to healthcare facilities. We ensure that patients' rights are heard in the process.

Economic Security:

- Pay Equity- Connecticut full-time working women earned 78% of what their male counterparts earned. This wage inequity amounts to a yearly wage gap of \$13,229 between full-time working men and women in the state. Women of color earn significantly less, with African-American women earning 59% and Hispanic women

earning 48% of what men earn. Our previous work on the Equal Pay for Equal Work bill led to the Governor's call for a Pay Equity Task Force to be led by the Commissioners of DOL and DECD. PCSW has been invited to participate.

- Promotion of Women Business Enterprises: Monitoring and supporting efforts, including a disparity study, to build on state procurement efforts to ensure women and minority enterprises have access to contracts.

I will not argue the fact that women in this state have made great strides. In fact, just last year Connecticut was named the "Best State for Women"-by a popular website that culled data from authoritative sources. While we held a press conference to acknowledge this declaration we know there is still work to be done. Women make, on average, only 78 cents to every dollar a man makes. Despite our majority status, women make up less than 6% of heads of corporations, and 38% of directors of state boards and commissions. As evidenced by the fight over Congress's defunding of Title X, women have an ongoing fight for access to safe and affordable health care. Too many of us still worry about getting fired for being pregnant, and aren't safe in our own homes. More than 40% of Connecticut's elderly women rely almost exclusively on Social Security for their annual income. Here, in the nation's wealthiest state, a Connecticut woman who lives alone, rents and relies entirely on the statewide average Social Security payment for a single older woman will fall nearly \$12,000 short of basic economic security each year.

We continue to be, nationally recognized by agencies like WOW who identified the PCSW as the lead state agency on critical economic security initiatives. Our most recent projects, the Basic Economic Security Tables and Elder Economic Standard Index are widely being used around the state as resources. We're the lead research provider for such groups as the Fairfield County Community Foundation's Fund for Women and Girls, and the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven's Community Fund for Women and Girls, who together represent more than one million Connecticut residents. As noted by the Greater New Haven Community Fund for Women and Girls testimony: *"The Fund's nearly \$40,000 investment in All Our Kin is directly linked to the compelling work of the PCSW. The research, knowledge and expert counsel provided by the PCSW helps to create the parameters by which grants are awarded. According to the CT Center for Economic Analysis study, our partnership with the PCSW and All Our Kin has resulted in as much as \$40 million in additional tax revenue to the state of CT."*

PCSW has been providing information, research and analysis to elected officials and the public regarding issues affecting the status of women across their lifespan - from young adults to elders. PCSW establishes legislative priorities, recommends legislative proposals, testifies on bills and helps give critical analysis of how public policy will - or will not - affect the 1,834,483 women in the state of Connecticut, which represents 51.3% of the state's population. Of the state's female population, 78% (1,435,664) are 18 years of age or over and 16% (293,745) are 65 years of age or over.

One of our approaches is through advocacy. And while we're not on the front line of advocacy, we do, in fact, directly affect the public policy that makes the best advocacy possible. After all, the word "advocacy" comes from the Latin meaning "to call together - to summon." That's what we do: we call together the various, diverse voices from across the state so you, as legislators, know what's on the minds of your constituents. This past year we hosted events that called together over several hundred participants such as the nationally recognized "CT Women: Be the Change" conference with Vision2020. The goal of this conference was to raise the awareness of women in the state on the multitude of issues women face. We also collaborated with CCADV, CFWGC and ConnSACS on "Women's Policy Day." This conference was designed to bring women to Hartford for a 101 on women's public policy efforts. We also had the pleasure of supporting the efforts of a rally this spring called "CT Women Unite," giving voice to concerns related to the "war on women" and just last week we had the honor of being part of the One Billion Rising efforts to raise awareness about violence against women.

Last week, we will hosted our annual "Women's Day at the Capitol" to allow women and men from across the state to voice concern on issues ranging from education to pay equity to incarcerated women to housing to leadership development to the ramifications of environmental pollutants on women's health. This crowd of over 250 women and men diverse in its racial composition, the ages of its members, economic strata, professions and geography, bore witness to the importance of the PCSW's work on issues of women's health and safety, economic security and the elimination of sex discrimination and were inspired by our keynote speaker Marcia Gillespie.

But advocacy is only part of what we do. Our work also emanates from the Capitol to the women and families you represent. Our job is to provide information, research, analysis, and assistance to the General Assembly, State agencies, state leaders and the public on all matters concerning women. In the past year, we've spoken to 53 groups, had nearly 1,500 friends join us on Facebook and over 870 followers on Twitter. We've had several hundred calls to our office for assistance, and a hundred media inquiries. We organized an informational hearing with the co-chairs of the Public Health Committee and Office of the State Comptroller on the Waterbury Hospitals merger. To date, we're monitoring more than 250 bills, testifying on critical topics like minimum wage, set-aside programs, domestic violence, human trafficking, Care4Kids, and TANF, to name just a few. Inquiries to our office have brought forth bills from an 11 year old, Isabella Glynn, on gender-neutral signs and a rising concern from male callers on FMLA, leading to an FMLI task force. Our issues are broad and we often find ourselves in front of 15 to 16 committees.

Prevention is the key to State savings and, as you know, it sometimes takes time to see the fruits of our labor. Many of our responsibilities are on-going because change takes time. It's tempting to say, in an unforgiving economy, that we can't wait for change. But that's like saying we know we have a small tumor, but we're just going to wait and see and hope it doesn't grow. Prevention does make financial sense.

The PCSW continues to provide sexual harassment awareness and prevention training to State agencies. However, our role now will be to serve more as a watchdog to monitor whether State agencies are actually providing these required trainings and if so, by whom. The savings from a preventable lawsuit saves the people in this state millions of dollars and reinforces a positive work environment. We have recently completed an agency survey on trainings and the implementation of workplace policies.

There are many such opportunities for us to bring together voices that matter; to ask the difficult, critical questions. That's our mandate: to gather and maintain current information regarding women of the state that can be used to better understand the status, condition and contributions of such women and to act on those findings so the people most likely to have the deepest effect on our society can be informed. Women make most of the economic decisions affecting families. Women determine how children are educated. Women make up half the workforce, are twice as likely as men to volunteer and make 80% of philanthropic contributions. And PCSW is the one out there talking with this highly influential – but underrepresented – population.

We have over the years convened a variety of groups in order to bring issues to state government; the PCSW convenes the Young Women's Leadership Program, which highlights the concerns of women ages 18-35 years; and led the effort to get more women appointed to executive level positions through our Connecticut Government Appointment Project (ConnGAP). PCSW provides leadership and expertise on 10 statutorily mandated bodies; eight boards and 18 coalitions, nationally and statewide.

Because of the work of the PCSW, our state government has been better equipped to address the needs of working parents, victims of sexual harassment, women with health care concerns, women business owners, parents seeking child support, women leaving welfare for work, childcare workers, and women entering

nontraditional occupations. Lois Uttley, Director of MergerWatch, writes: *"No other state-based advocacy organization has the capacity and the political will to fight for Connecticut women like the PCSW. As the research and public policy arm of the General Assembly, the PCSW holds the State of Connecticut accountable for policies and practices that are discriminatory to women or that fall to advance the status of women."*

These are just some of the ways in which the PCSW's work has helped gain our state national recognition as a leader on the issues of women's economic security, health and safety and eradicating gender discrimination.

Since we are just kicking off March Madness and I am an old basketball player, I often think of our work at the PCSW in sports terms, thanks to Title IX. I enjoy watching the games with amazement as our own UConn players and those from out of state, like Brittney Griner with her more than 3000 shots and 500 shots blocked, dazzle.

A few years back, we referred to our work as being a point guard-assessing the floor, controlling the play and setting the shot. Now, I'd like us to be a powerful center-elevating those around us, taking the shot when need be, keeping the offense in check, protecting the center of the floor, passing the ball back out and every once in a while dunking the ball- because we can.

Thank you. I most sincerely wish you well as you go further into your difficult work.